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BISMUTH IN THE FOURTH QUARTER 1997

Domestic consumption of bismuth in the fourth quarter of 1997 was 3% higher than in the third quarter. The largest increase (22%) was in the metallurgical additives sector. As compared with the fourth quarter of 1996, the total was 13% higher.

The Defense Logistics Agency sold the National Defense Stockpile's remaining inventory of 85 metric tons of bismuth on November 4, 1997. The average price of this last sale was \$2.85 per pound (Mining Journal, 1997). The National Defense Stockpile is now totally depleted of bismuth.

The New York dealer price for bismuth, as published by Platt's Metals Week, was \$3.48 per pound at the beginning of the fourth quarter. The price fell steadily during the quarter and reached \$3.33 per pound by the end of the year.

World supplies appear to be adequate for current demand.

The price continued to drift downward in 1997. It has fallen roughly 10% over the last 2 years. Imports of bismuth to the United States increased by more than one-third over the year. This increase was an expected result of the closure of the only domestic producing plant in June, 1997.

Update:

The New York dealer price for bismuth began to increase early in 1998 and reached \$3.63 per pound by mid-February.

Reference Cited

Mining Journal, 1997, Minor metals in November: Mining Journal, v. 329, no. 8458, December 5, p. 473.

TABLE 1
SALIENT BISMUTH STATISTICS 1/

(Kilograms, unless otherwise specified)

	1996	1997				Total
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	
Consumption	1,520,000	387,000	367,000	423,000 r/	437,000	1,610,000
Exports 2/	151,000	38,300	92,200	38,700	NA	NA
Imports for consumption	1,490,000	603,000	487,000	607,000	NA	NA
Price per pound, dealer, end of period	\$3.65	\$3.20	\$3.88	\$3.48	\$3.33	XX
Stocks, end of period, consumer	122,000	108,000	125,000	115,000	220,000	XX

r/ Revised. NA Not available. XX Not applicable.

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits.

2/ Comprises bismuth metal and the bismuth content of alloys and waste and scrap.

TABLE 2
BISMUTH METAL CONSUMED IN THE UNITED STATES, BY USE 1/

(Kilograms)

Use	1996	1997				Total
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	
Chemicals 2/	855,000	211,000	186,000	226,000 r/	217,000	841,000
Bismuth alloys	401,000	108,000	114,000	130,000 r/	138,000	490,000
Metallurgical additives	231,000	62,300	59,800	61,200	74,800	258,000
Other	35,000	6,000	6,000	6,000 r/	7,000	25,000
Total	1,520,000	387,000	367,000	423,000 r/	437,000	1,610,000

r/ Revised.

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ Includes industrial and laboratory chemicals, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

TABLE 3
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF BISMUTH METAL, BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms)

Country	1996 Year total	1997				
		September	Third quarter	October	November	Year to date
Belgium	584,000	62,000	219,000	63,800	36,500	691,000
Canada	80,800	4,440	33,700	3,310	2,030	96,200
China	151,000	--	89,100	10,100	9,620	143,000
France	--	--	32	--	--	32
Germany	498	--	--	--	--	107
Hong Kong	15,800	--	--	--	--	--
Japan	1,680	--	600	--	--	600
Macao	--	--	--	--	--	20,000
Malaysia	--	4,270	4,270	--	--	4,270
Mexico	453,000	40,100	111,000	47,000	46,300	553,000
Netherlands	--	--	--	--	45	45
Peru	19,500	19,700	25,700	40,400	8,920	143,000
Spain	--	--	--	--	--	100
Switzerland	--	--	--	--	--	19
United Kingdom	189,000	57,200	124,000	37,200	39,900	390,000
Total	1,490,000	188,000	607,000	202,000	143,000	2,040,000

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: Bureau of the Census.

TABLE 4
U.S. EXPORTS OF BISMUTH METAL, ALLOYS, AND WASTE AND SCRAP, BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms, metal content)

Country	1996	1997				
	Year total	September	Third quarter	October	November	Year to date
Argentina	137	--	960	--	--	960
Australia	197	1	1	--	--	21
Belgium	65,500	--	18,100	--	--	36,900
Bermuda	--	--	--	180	--	180
Brazil	50	--	--	--	--	--
Canada	59,500	5,790	11,600	5,850	1,620	118,000
China	--	--	684	--	--	684
Dominican Republic	1,150	95	205	--	79	1,290
Finland	472	--	--	--	--	--
France	5,380	--	--	--	--	2,450
Germany	497	--	--	--	--	1,300
Grenada	--	--	--	--	--	717
Guatemala	14,200	--	--	--	--	--
Hong Kong	--	--	--	--	--	166
Ireland	227	--	191	--	--	1,500
Israel	--	1,740	2,230	--	--	2,230
Korea, Republic of	63	--	--	--	--	--
Malaysia	--	--	--	--	--	103
Mexico	51	--	103	--	13	218
Netherlands	209	--	--	--	--	4,980
Singapore	144	2,240	4,600	--	--	4,800
Switzerland	2,220	--	--	--	--	--
Taiwan	--	--	1	26	--	72
Thailand	45	--	--	--	--	--
United Kingdom	596	--	1	795	--	796
Total	151,000	9,870	38,700	6,850	1,720	178,000

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: Bureau of the Census.